

Columbia Parks and Recreation Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: May 14, 2020

1. Which Parks and Recreation facilities can I use under the City of Columbia's Order 2020-05 that took effect May 4, 2020?

Under the order, the Activity & Recreation Center (ARC) opened on May 4 with a “phased in” approach. Outdoor tennis and pickleball courts reopened as well. Starting the week of May 11, the Columbia Sports Fieldhouse and outdoor athletic fields will reopen for reservations; there will be no games and scrimmages. Please scroll through the FAQs for specific information. Reminder...social distancing guidelines MUST be used at all Parks and Recreation facilities, parks and trails. Review the full Order 2020-05 at [CoMo.gov/coronavirus/](https://columbiago.gov/coronavirus/).

2. Why are you closing some facilities to the public?

Columbia's Order 2020-05 requires social distancing guidelines to be in place for public health. This results in the closure of some facilities such as basketball courts, playgrounds, spraygrounds and Stephens Lake Park beach, where it is impossible to maintain social distancing and avoidance of common touch points. The health and safety of our patrons and employees are our top priority.

3. What is the status of the ARC? Why are some amenities not available?

Order 2020-05 allows gyms to reopen as long as social distancing guidelines are followed and facility occupancy guidelines are met. Based on the Order, the ARC can reopen as long as we maintain 10 percent or less capacity of our occupancy as defined by fire code.

Under these new guidelines, the ARC will reopen at 5:30 am, Monday, May 4 with these amenities available and social distancing guidelines in place:

- Walking track
- Spinning room
- Cardio Zone
- Strength Zone
- Youth Training Room
- Ping pong room

We will not be able to open basketball courts, the concession area, Water Zone or Kid Zone at this time. We also will not be able to hold group activities such as land or water fitness classes, swimming lessons, Little Swimmers/Gymmers or birthday party rentals. It would be extremely difficult to enforce social distancing by allowing these activities.

Daily pass visitors to the ARC will be required to provide their name and contact information as they enter the facility, per Order 2020-05. This information will be saved to daily visit logs. You are encouraged to come to the facility, exercise and then exit the facility. Groups will not be allowed to congregate in common areas, so that we can ensure social distancing is being followed and that our capacity limits are being met while allowing others the opportunity to use the facility.

4. Are parks, trails and dog parks open?

Yes, outdoor spaces in parks and trails are open, although the use of some park amenities is prohibited, including outdoor basketball courts, playgrounds and outdoor fitness equipment. Additionally, the west side of Cosmo Park, just south of the tennis courts, is closed to vehicular traffic to allow for added park space for pedestrians and wheeled sports. Cosmo Park patrons will still be able to access the tennis courts, Skate Park, Bear Creek Trail and Rhett's Run on the north side of the park.

With the exception of our leash free areas, dogs being walked in a park or on an established trail shall be on a leash and reined in to within four feet of the responsible person whenever approaching or being approached by another trail user. Bring your own pet waste bag and practice "pack it in, pack it out" guidelines or place in trash receptacles.

Please observe all signs related to closures. Anyone engaging in outdoor exercise activities must follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and city guidelines and you must keep a distance of at least six feet between you and other people at all times.

5. Why is the west side of Cosmo Park closed to vehicular traffic and why are there one-way traffic signs posted at the Cosmo Fitness Trail and other select loop trails?

The west side of Cosmo Park (just south of the tennis courts) is temporarily closed during Columbia's Stay at Home Order to allow more open space for pedestrian and wheeled activities (i.e. cycling and skating). Parking lots and park roads in the closed area of Cosmo Park are now open for walking, running, skating and cycling. Park patrons are asked to walk in a clockwise direction on the Cosmo Fitness Trail to allow for appropriate social distancing. Trail users should follow enhanced trail etiquette guidelines as noted on #6. The playgrounds in Cosmo Park will remain closed until further notice.

Regarding select loop trails marked with one-way, clockwise signage: Dramatic increases in trail visitation is being recorded across the United States; an analysis of 31 trail counters for the week of March 16–22 by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) found a nationwide trail usage increase of nearly 200% from that same week in 2019, which can make maintaining a safe distance of 6 feet challenging. It's vital that people find ways to engage in physical activity during this time as the benefits of exercise to our immune systems and our mental health are significant. However, the overriding message from experts is to put safety first when out on the trail. First and foremost, self compliance with maintaining a social distance of at least 6 feet—the length experts say is effective to stop the spread of COVID-19—is critical, as is self-care.

Therefore, like many agencies across the world, the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department is implementing guidelines for one-way traffic on select loop trails located at the following parks:

1. Cosmo Recreation Area: Cosmo Fitness Trail
2. Stephens Lake Park: perimeter and lake trails
3. Albert-Oakland Park: loop trail
4. Cosmo-Bethel Park: loop trail
5. Philips Park: loop trail

Destination trails such as the MKT, Bear Creek, Hominy, Scott's Branch Trail and County House Branch remain open for two-way traffic. When using out and back trails, patrons are encouraged to walk in single file when approaching or passing and are encouraged to step completely off the trail at bottlenecks. Please sound a warning as you begin to pass and remember the trail adage of "keep right/pass left." Review expanded trail etiquette guidelines in #6.

6. How do I maintain social distancing and COVID-19 safety guidelines in the parks or on the trails?

Adhere to the following guidelines when visiting parks and trails:

- Do not use parks or trails if you are exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 such as fever, coughing and/or trouble breathing.
- Prepare for your trip by using home restroom facilities, packing a water bottle, hand sanitizer, etc. before you leave your house.
- Follow CDC's guidance on personal hygiene prior to and while on trails, including washing hands and coughing/sneezing into your elbow.
- If parking lots are full, please do not park along roadsides or in other undesignated areas. Please choose a different area to walk or return when parking is available. Parking overflowing onto nearby streets creates tensions with neighbors who may seek to have the outdoor areas closed.
- Consider avoiding the most popular places to walk (i.e. Stephens Lake Park and the MKT Trail) and use this opportunity to explore trails and areas that are not as well known. Visit our website for trail information: <https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/trail/>. Follow our Facebook page for trail highlights at <https://www.facebook.com/ComoParksandRec/>. Review #18 for suggested lesser-known parking lots and trails.
- Observe at all times CDC's minimum recommended physical distancing of 6 feet from people outside of your household. Practice it and know what it looks like. Keep it as you transition from your vehicle and as you walk, bike or hike. Walk behind or farther ahead. Avoid walking side by side. Walk single file when passing and approaching other trail users.
- When necessary, step completely off the trail to allow other trail users to safely pass. When visiting with other trail users, stand on the same side of the trail adhering to social distancing guidelines.
- Warn others as you pass by calling out "on your left" or ringing a bike bell.

- Follow social distancing guidelines in parking lots and pinch points (access trails, bridges and intersections). Avoid lingering on trail bridges and in parking lots.
- Be aware of high touch points like handles, gates and pet waste bag dispensers.
- Practice "pack it in, pack it out" standards related to all waste products. Bring pet waste bags from home. Leaving no trash behind helps protect park staff and other park and trail users.
- Go out early or later in the day to avoid crowds.
- Do not engage in sport activities utilizing shared equipment with anyone outside of your family unit.
- Exercise an extreme level of social and personal responsibility when visiting parks and trails.
- Adhere to all park amenity and trail signs regarding closures or one-way traffic where noted on park loop trails.

7. What is the status of the City's golf courses, L.A. Nickell and Lake of the Woods?

L.A. Nickell and Lake of the Woods golf courses reopened on Friday, April 17 at 8 a.m. The reopening of the golf courses does NOT mean that the City of Columbia is easing on social distancing guidelines. Parks and Recreation is implementing strict measures to ensure the safety of staff and golfers. Please note these changes in golf course operations at this time:

- The clubhouses at both courses are closed. Instead, temporary walk-up windows have been installed at each clubhouse to minimize contact between the staff attendant and golfer.
- Golfers are encouraged to pay for their tee time online prior to arrival, or payment can be accepted at the walk-up window. Credit card payment is preferred but cash is accepted.
- Golfers are encouraged to walk the course if possible. However, a limited number of golf carts may be rented. Private golf carts will also be allowed. All private and rented carts will be restricted to one person per cart with the exception of immediate family members in the same household may be a passenger in carts. Rented carts will be fully sanitized by a cart attendant between each use.
- Tee times are available daily, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the courses set to close by 7 p.m. Tee times will be kept 18 minutes apart to maintain distance between golfers.
- There will be no water coolers on the course, concession operations, nor access to clubhouse or course restrooms. Two portable toilets are set at each course near the clubhouses.
- Golfers are allowed to bring their own food and beverage; however, the City's liquor license does not allow for personal alcoholic beverages. Trash cans will be limited on the course, so golfers are encouraged to practice a "pack it in, pack it out" policy.
- Devices have been placed in the cup to stop the ball from entering the cup. Golfers are not allowed to remove the flagstick in each hole. Ball washers and bunker rakes have been removed.

- The driving range at Lake of the Woods is open as well (the L.A. Nickell driving range remains closed for renovations). Clubhouse staff will sanitize baskets after each use. Golf balls are picked up mechanically and placed directly into a ball washing machine, so there is no contact.
- Golfers should arrive no more than 10 minutes before their tee time. After their round is complete, golfers should promptly leave the course. Groups are not allowed to gather outside the clubhouse or in the parking lots.
- To remain in compliance with the current Stay at Home Order restricting crowd size, there will be no tournaments until further notice.
- Tee times may be made online at golfcolumbiamo.com or at 573.499.GOLF (4653).

8. Are disc golf courses open at Harmony Bends at Strawn Park, Albert-Oakland Park and Indian Hills Park?

Disc golf is an individual sport that can be played during this restricted social time. Friendly reminders: practice social distancing if playing with a friend, wash hands before and after play, and avoid touching the basket when retrieving your personal disc.

9. Can my kids play on playgrounds in public or private parks?

No. As stated in Columbia's Order 2020-05, playgrounds (including children's play structures in public or private parks) and spraygrounds are closed.

10. Can I play tennis, pickleball or basketball at any park?

Tennis and pickleball courts reopen on May 4 for play. Basketball courts will remain closed.

11. What is the status of sports facilities?

We are opening reservations for the Columbia Sports Fieldhouse and outdoor athletic fields, starting May 11. Groups will be restricted to 10 people or less (including coaches) and social distancing guidelines must be observed. We recommend that those making reservations focus on activities that can maintain distancing requirements such as individual drills, conditioning, and specific skill development. **Games and scrimmages will be prohibited at all facilities.**

At this time, reservations will be taken from May 11 through May 25, so that staff can monitor procedures and make any needed modifications. The reservation timeline may be extended beyond May 25. In addition to social distancing requirements and restrictions of 10 people or less, please see below for specific facility usage:

Columbia Sports Fieldhouse

- Existing reservation guidelines will be in place, see CoMo.gov for details.

- Each player should use their own ball. If a ball is to be shared, it should be sanitized after each player's use.
- The number of players using each basket at any one time should be limited to 4 or fewer.
- Each player should bring their own water bottle - no sharing water bottles/coolers.
- All parents should stay in their cars during practice.
- All players and coaches must keep a minimum of 6 feet between each other at all times.
- Staff will be in place at the facility to enforce social distancing and group capacity guidelines.

Soccer Fields

- Reservations available daily from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at Cosmo Park soccer fields 1-19 (except fields 4 and 5), Scott Boulevard west and east fields and Jay Dix Station soccer fields.
- Fields will not be lined.
- Any ball, if picked up by a player, should be sanitized before being put back into play.
- Each player should bring their own water bottle - no sharing water bottles/coolers.
- All parents should stay in their cars during practice.
- All players and coaches must keep a minimum of 6 feet between each other at all times.
- Weather cancellations will be posted to the recreation hotline at 573.874.7663.

Baseball/Softball Fields

- Antimi Sports Complex at Cosmo Park and fields at Atkins, Albert-Oakland, American Legion and Cosmo-Bethel parks are available for reservation Mondays through Fridays from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Rainbow Softball Center at Cosmo Park is available for reservation on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4 to 8 p.m.
- Balls should be regularly sanitized.
- Each player should use their own bat. If a bat is to be shared, it should be sanitized after each player's use.
- Each player should bring their own water bottle - no sharing water bottles/coolers.
- All parents should stay in their cars during practice.
- All players and coaches must keep a minimum of 6 feet between each other at all times.
- Fields will not be lined.
- Weather cancellations will be posted to the recreation hotline at 573.874.7663.
- Neighborhood park ballfields will remain "first come, first served." Those using the fields are expected to follow social distancing guidelines.

12. What kind of activities can I do in the park?

Columbia's Order 2020-05 allows for outdoor exercise activities, such as walking, hiking, jogging, walking the dog, or cycling where no shared equipment is utilized by patrons. Maintaining a social distance guideline of six feet is required.

13. Are you still conducting park and trail maintenance?

Yes. Contact us at 573.874.7201 or parksandrec@CoMo.gov for park or trail maintenance needs.

14. Will I receive a refund for programs and classes for which I have registered if they fall within the Order 2020-05 guidelines prohibiting groups of more than 10 people?

Yes, refunds will be prorated as necessary. Facility rental reservations can also be transferred to another date without penalty, or the renter may wish to modify their rental based on the group size limitations. Refunds via credit card can take up to 7 business days. Payments made via check or cash can take up to 3 weeks by mail. We recommend you hold a credit on your account and reschedule instead. For more information, contact our office at 573.874.7460 or parksandrec@CoMo.gov.

15. Are private events canceled in City parks and facilities?

Order 2020-05 limits the size of both private and public events to 10 people or less. Any event with more than 10 people planned in a City park or facility will be canceled during the time the Order is in place.

16. How can I find out the status of a Parks and Recreation event, program or facility closure?

Information related to the COVID-19 pandemic is fluid and evolving. Citizens should consult the [City of Columbia's Coronavirus COVID-19 Official Information](#) webpage for updates related to [Closures and Cancellations](#).

17. What should I do if I see activity in a park or trail that I think violates Columbia's Order 2020-05?

First, use good judgment. Family situations vary and there are "non-traditional" groups of people (i.e. group residential care facilities, campus fraternity houses, etc.) living together during this virus. If you feel the need to share helpful information do so by contacting Columbia Parks and Recreation at 573.874.7460 or parksandrec@CoMo.gov or contact the Columbia Police Department's non-emergency phone number at 573.442.6131 or 311.

18. What parking lots and trail locations do you suggest I visit to avoid crowds during Columbia's Order 2020-05?

In order to keep parks and trails open we need everyone to spread out away from the MKT Trail and trails at Stephens Lake Park. While we can't guarantee space at any parking lot, below are suggestions for lesser-known trailheads to access multi-use, destination trails and community park loop trails. For maps, trail mileage and other details visit <https://www.como.gov/parksandrec/trail/>

1. **Bear Creek Trail Trailheads:** Cosmo Recreation Area, Creasy Springs Road, Albert Oakland Park off either Blue Ridge Road or Oakland Gravel Road

2. **Scott's Branch Trail:** Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary also provides access to the Prairie Education Trail and 0.9-mile nature trail. Additionally, consider visiting the seasonal parking lot off Plymouth Drive behind Fairview Elementary School.
3. **County House Branch Trail:** Twin Lakes Recreation Area (also access to the MKT Trail and pedestrian only trails at Forum Nature Area).
4. **Hominy Creek Trail:** cyclists can park and ride from the far southeast lot at Stephens Lake Park.
5. **Hinkson Creek/MU Rec Trails:** Martin Luther King Jr./Stadium Blvd Trailhead, walk southwest on the MKT and access the Hinkson Creek Trail/MU Rec Trail near mile marker 6.75.
6. **Cosmo Recreation Area,** 1.25-mile asphalt Fitness Trail, access to the Bear Creek Trail, Rhett's Run and Cosmo Nature Trail. Note: we have closed the southwest corner of Cosmo to vehicle traffic to allow more space for pedestrians and wheeled activities (see #4).
7. **Philips Park,** 1.4-mile gravel loop trail.
8. **Cosmo-Bethel Park,** .5-mile concrete loop trail, access available from two parking lots.
9. **Albert-Oakland Park,** 1-mile concrete outer loop trail, also access to the Bear Creek Trail.

19. What park restrooms are open at this time?

Park staff is cleaning and sanitizing restrooms daily and keeping them stocked with soap. Year-round restrooms are open in the parks. These include:

- Cosmo Park Lamb/Nickell Shelter
- Cosmo-Bethel Park
- Albert-Oakland Park restrooms by Shelters #2 & #3
- Stephens Lake Park Gordon Shelter restroom
- Grindstone Nature Area
- MKT Forum trailhead
- MKT Scott trailhead
- Bear Creek Trail/Garth Nature Area
- MU Health Care Pavilion

Seasonal restrooms that are closed for the winter started to reopen on May 4 and 11. These include:

- Cosmo Park - Roundabout
- A. Perry Philips Park
- MKT Trail Stadium Boulevard trailhead
- Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary
- Douglass Park
- Stephens Lake Park - Beach restroom
- Twin Lakes Recreation Area near shelter
- Rock Quarry Park
- Indian Hills Park
- American Legion Park

- Cosmo Park - Antimi concession facility
- Cosmo Park - Soccer Concession
- Gans Creek Recreation Area - concession facility (family restroom only)
- Atkins concessions (family restroom only)
- Cosmo Park -Dexheimer Shelter

Other seasonal restrooms will be phased in.